

Journal of Human Resources Research and Development

Appendix E

THE NITON AREA

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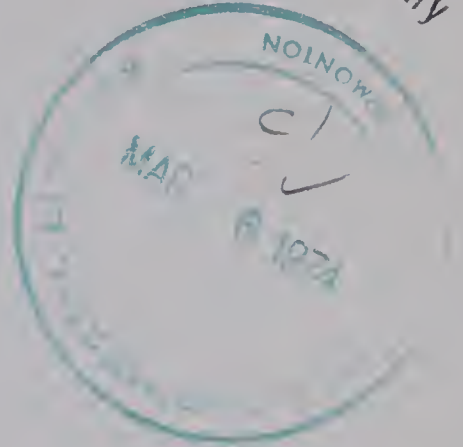
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COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT





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Appendix E
THE NITON AREA

COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

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and
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Human Resources Research and Development
EXECUTIVE COUNCIL - GOVERNMENT OF ALBERTA

Edmonton, Alberta
March, 1967

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CHAPTER I

GEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION

Rock Formation

The underlying rocks in the Edson district are shales and sandstones which were deposited by streams in lakes and deltas. Fresh water in origin, they are several hundred feet thick in that area. The rocks are of the "Paskapoo Formation" and date from the early tertiary age, which began some fifty million years ago. Since these rocks were deposited, the North American Continent has been uplifted. Consequently the rocks have eroded and only a fraction of their original thickness remains. During the Ice Age, glaciers moved over this area, depositing on the surface boulder clay and similar glacial deposits. Many of the hills and small elevations in this area consist of glacial deposits.¹

Soil Types and Natural Vegetation

The Niton area is on the western edge of the Great Plains and still maintains some of the prairie features. The land is basically flat and is rather heavily covered with mixed deciduous and evergreen forests. Moss bogs (muskegs) and sedge bogs are common and often they will cover several square miles.

Although a detailed soil survey remains to be done, reconnaissance surveying indicates that the land in the area is of the grey wooded variety. The general description of such soils found on the Soil Zones of Alberta Map is as follows:

These soils have developed under humid soil moisture conditions. The surface horizon consists of semi-decomposed leaf litter (L-H) that may be absent if the area has been burned over; a thin (sometimes absent) AH horizon that may be grey black, brown or grey brown, and a severely leached and platy, greyish Ae horizon whose depth will average about 6 to 8 inches. The B horizons are finer textured, compact, and often darker in color than the A. The depth to lime is quite variable, often ranging from 30 to 50 inches.

Fertility - Soils in this zone are relatively less fertile because of leaching. They are usually deficient in nitrogen, phosphorus, organic matter, and sometimes in sulphur.

Land Use - Mixed farming in which legumes, hays and coarse grains are the most desirable crops. Rotations including legumes and grasses, supplemented with fertilizers, have given the most satisfactory results.²

Climate and Weather

The climate of the area is classified as boreal, having from one to

three months with an average temperature of 50 degrees F. or more. The climate is characterized by long, severe winters and short summers with widely fluctuating conditions. The weather conditions indicate the advisability of restricting agricultural produce to cereal crops, grasses, legumes, and cool season garden crops. Even for these crops conditions are far from ideal. Weather reports indicate that there are, on the average, sufficient frost free days for successful cereal crop production but these weather reports are based on forestry tower reports which do not accurately portray the weather in the surrounding country. These towers are all located on high land and consequently have more frost free-days than lower lying areas. Because of this it would seem reasonable to assume that the number of frost-free days given in Table 1 below is high. Other evidence that the figures are high comes from a survey of 200 farmers in the area which showed that crops freeze three years out of ten.³

CHAPTER I, TABLE 1.

Mean Number of Frost-Free Days and Mean Temperatures in the Niton District

<u>Location*</u>	<u>Day of last frost</u>	<u>Day of first frost</u>	<u>Number of frost-free days</u>	<u>Distance from interview area</u>
Carrot Ck.	142	254	112	10 miles south
Edson	167	241	74	20 miles west
Evansburg	162	246	84	10 miles east

Temperature

Mean summer temperature - 53 degrees F.
Mean winter temperature - 23 degrees F.
Mean yearly temperature - 36 degrees F.⁴

*See map in Figure 1 for these locations.

The average total annual precipitation is 20.85 inches, of which 14.98 inches falls as rain.⁵

FOOTNOTES:

¹Survey of Edson, Industrial Development Branch, page 1.

²Soil Zones of Alberta (map). Arranged and drawn by Wm. Odynsky, Research Council of Alberta. Third Edition, revised January, 1962.

³V. T. Janssen, K. A. Svenson and W. R. Meeks, Resources for Rural Development in Census Division 14. Alberta Department of Agriculture (1966), pages 7-8.

⁴Survey of Edson, page 2.

⁵Resources for Rural Development, page 211.

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AREA

The first settlers moved into the Niton area just after the turn of the century. The railroad had not been built and was not built until about 1908, at which time two railroads raced across the country for the coast. Now Highway 16 runs along one of the old right of ways.

Before the railroads arrived in the country there were a few trappers and a few who were trying to exploit the extensive forests in the area. Also during this period there was some commercial fishing in Chip Lake, the western shore of which formed the eastern boundary of the interview area.

When the railroads started to build their way across the country new prosperity came with them as did new settlers. With the construction of two railroads, work on the railroads and in the mills was plentiful. During this boom railroad ties were cut in the area by the thousands. Since there were vast stands of timber in the area, contracts were let for ties for both eastern and western building operations, allowing the mills to become relatively permanent. These mills attracted hundreds of workers to the area but they only operated during the winter months. This situation gave rise to the area's first farms as the mill workers solved the problem of summer employment by taking out homesteads. Others arrived by rail specifically to settle the land. This later group was in the minority so that farming got a very slow start in the area. The mill workers and loggers who had taken up land did little with it - they just were not farmers! Even those who arrived with the intention of farming often became discouraged: the forests were too thick and the stumps too large to pull with horses. Consequently few farms were developed. Since there was not much money in logging, for the average worker, many left the area when other work became available with the outbreak of World War I. The drain on the population of the area was particularly heavy at the beginning of the war and apparently few of those who left ever came back.

In the 1920's logging was still the primary source of income in the area with the demand for ties and saw logs for lumber providing ample employment. Still, however, there were no large population concentrations. Several small towns did develop to the east and the west of the Niton area but there was no similar development within the interview area. Three railroad stations

were located within the area surveyed and each of these also supported a store. Now all of these stations are closed. One of the centers has disappeared entirely, another maintains a store around which cluster a half dozen houses inhabited by older people, and the third has just a general store. Another new center, Niton Junction, came into existence after the highway became more heavily travelled and it is today the largest center in the area surveyed. To call it a center, however, is somewhat misleading, for there is only one store whose business seems to be to provide people with what they forgot on their shopping trips into Edson or Edmonton. In addition, Niton Junction has two service stations, a school with an enrolment of approximately 300, and about 25 houses.

Under the Dry Farmer's Settlement Act a number of farmers moved into the area from Saskatchewan during the 1920's. According to the area's old timers, only three or four of these families made a successful adjustment and stayed. During this same period a similar success rate had been achieved under the Soldier's Settlement Act. About 25 families moved into the area under these plans and attempted to farm but in spite of their efforts up until the 1930's there were only half a dozen men in the area who could be said to be farming.

However, with the advent of the depression the Government felt it was necessary to move some of those on relief who were living in the cities. Consequently, a program was established under which a man could get a \$600 loan if he would leave the city and homestead. In addition those who made the move were given \$10 per month to stay on their homesteads. At the time it sounded like, and was, a rather attractive arrangement so many families moved into the area. In fact, settlement in the 1930's swelled the population until it reached a peak of 4,946 people in 1941, a figure larger than the present population. (see Table 1). Unfortunately, if a man was to succeed in such a heavily wooded area he had to be exceptionally hard-working and persevering. Such men were rare. Thus, after the \$10 per month provision expired many left. Others stayed on for a few more years but there was now even less money in mill work than had formerly been the case. Accordingly the gradual exodus of population which was heaviest during the 1940's, continued into the decade of the '50's.

This general pattern seems to have been repeated about four times in the area; a group of settlers would move in, generally under duress. In time they would find it impossible to make an adequate living farming or in the mills so they would gradually move out again when conditions started to look

good elsewhere. The movements have always been relatively gradual but there has been an extensive turnover. It is only within the last 15 or 20 years that this high migration rate has begun to decrease.

CHAPTER II, TABLE 1.

Population Growth in I. D. 78
from 1911 to 1961*

Date	Population
1911	1,086
1921	1,594
1931	3,177
1941	4,946
1951	3,724
1961	3,484

*Source: Dominion Bureau of Statistics

CHAPTER III
PRESENT LAND USE

The Niton area is included in Improvement District (I.D.) 78 which is, in turn, included in Census Division (C.D.) 14. Of the 7,667,000 acres in the census division just slightly less than 1,000,000 acres are available for settlement. Green areas, zones which are set aside for forestry operations and are not available for settlement, cover most of the remaining area. The Niton area is closely bounded on the south and on the north by these green areas so that the land available for settlement is generally not much more than 25 miles wide.

In the entire census division only 359,975 acres or 4.7% of the land is devoted to agriculture. On the whole trends in farming practice in the division are parallel to those in the rest of the province. Thus it has been found that the number of farms in the division has been decreasing while the size of the remaining units is getting larger. In the period 1951 - 1961 the number of farms in Alberta decreased by 13.2% and the average number of acres per farm increased by 22.3%. In the same period the number of farms in C.D. 14 decreased by 25.5% and the number of acres per farm increased by 20.8%. There is evidence now, from a survey done in 1965, that the size of farms in the area has increased considerably since 1961.¹

Of the total farm land in Alberta 52% is classified as improved while in C.D. 14 only 35% is improved. However, there is considerable land clearing in progress and the rate of land clearing is accelerating. In I.D. 78, which includes the Niton area, the average amount of unimproved land per farm decreased from 195.7 acres in 1956 to 187.5 acres in 1961. There is reason to suppose that the amount of unimproved farm land has dropped substantially since 1961.

The percentage of improved land under cereal crops in the province (62%) differs only slightly from that in C.D. 14 (67%). This fact may be, in part, responsible for the lower incomes in the area, since the area seems to be better suited to grass - cattle operations than it is to grain farming. A further factor may be that while the provincial average for summer fallowing of land stands at 28% the figure for C.D. 14 is only 14%. These figures suggest that the most efficient use is not being made of the land which is

already improved. These factors and others which will be discussed later make the income picture for the area rather dim.

One measure of the type of farming that goes on in the area is the total income received in the area from the sale of farm goods. C.D. 14 contains 1.3% of Alberta's farmers, but the division receives only 0.4% of the provincial figure realized from the sale of farm goods. This low figure is partly attributable to the small size of the farms in the area, to poor soil and weather conditions, to the type of farming that is presently being carried on, to inefficient farming methods, and to the nature of the individual farmer. However, the most important single factor is the large amount of income that is earned from non-farm sources. In 1961 53% of the farmers in C.D. 14 were engaged in some non-farm job. In 1964 this figure had risen to 62%. With such a large proportion of men working off their farms there is not the time available to devote to raising farm produce on the scale that is the case in most other areas. The distribution of farm incomes shows that in C.D. 14, 20% of the farmers received less than \$250 from the sale of farm goods. The corresponding figure for the province was 6%. Further, 50.7% of Alberta farms had sales under \$3500 while 86.3% of C.D. 14 farms had sales under that figure. 75% of the farmers in C.D. 14 had sales under \$2500 compared to 26% for the province as a whole.

There is some reason to suppose that this picture will be altered in the next few years as many farmers are just now beginning to show a profit. That such a movement has begun is shown by the fact that the investment in land in the division has almost doubled in the past four years. The investment in machinery and equipment has increased by 50% over the same period while the investment in livestock has increased by one third. This increase in the investment in machinery and equipment may be another area where capital is not being used to best advantage. The returns from the land may not warrant such a heavy investment in machinery since the land is better suited to haying and stock raising than to cereal grain production, as we have noted. The farmers in the division now have an investment of \$29 per improved acre as compared to the provincial average of \$22 per improved acre.

Further, even though the area is best suited to grass - cattle operations, the gains in cattle numbers are only slightly higher than the provincial average. Only 7% of borrowed money is used to purchase cattle so that herds cannot be expected to increase too rapidly. A related factor here is that farmers are not keeping their cattle to optimal ages and so receive a much

lower figure per animal than do cattle raisers in other areas of the province.

In research done in the census division in 1964 an attempt was made to determine the number of farmers who might be financially distressed. Those farmers who had gross sales of less than \$2,500 but more than \$250, who had a total capital investment of less than \$25,000 and who worked off their farms less than one month were termed financially distressed. Even though this figure does not include many poor or semi-poor people, it nevertheless included 30% of the farm population, according to 1961 data. By 1964 this figures had dropped to 10% and most of these were in I.D. 78 (which includes the Niton area). In 1961, 46% of these farmers were over 55 years of age while 80% were in 1965. In a sample of 50 taken from the distressed group who were asked if they would leave the farm, two-thirds reported that they would not consider it and 8% said they would leave if the annual salary were over \$4,000. The remainder said they would leave if the annual salary were considerably in excess of the figure, ranging up to \$10,000.

FOOTNOTE:

¹The following statistics were taken from a study by V. T. Janssen, K. A. Svenson and W. R. Meeks, Resources for Rural Development in Census Division 14, 1966.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Physical Setting

Residents of the Niton district tend to be more isolated from vital services than are residents of more central and prosperous areas of Alberta. Although the distances of farms from various vital services are generally from 10 to 15 miles, as shown in Table 1, almost all of the residents have either a car or a truck for transportation. The isolation of the Niton district presents a problem mainly in terms of medical services. About half of the respondents in the Niton district reported they had to travel more than 25 miles to the nearest doctor and/or hospital.

CHAPTER IV, TABLE 1

Distance of Niton Interview Respondents
from Vital Services

Service	% within 10 miles	% within 15 miles	% within 25 miles
Doctor	--	2	43
Hospital	--	--	53
Elementary School	63	83	100
High School	57	78	98
General Store	92	100	100
Provincial Highway	88	94	98

Population Data

The Niton district is still rather sparsely populated, compared with the rest of rural Alberta, and the population has declined slightly during the past ten years. The dominant ethnic group is of British origin. There is almost no non-white element. Compared with other parts of Alberta, there is a low proportion of native born residents. Detailed population data are given later in the report in the section devoted to a description of the resident.

Social Organization: Work and Welfare, an Impressionistic Discussion

It is only within the last 20 years and particularly within the last

10 years that there have been any serious attempts to farm. However, conditions have been such that even serious attempts made by shrewd and experienced farmers have often been thwarted. In the first place, the cost of clearing the land has been prohibitive - seldom less than \$40 per acre. Secondly, in recent years the cost of machinery has risen tremendously while the prices that a farmer gets for his products have not risen accordingly. The resulting gap has made it necessary for farmers to work on a far larger scale and be far more efficient.

Since most of the men in the interview area want to stay in farming their potential must be seen against this inexorable pressure for increased size and efficiency. Many of the farmers in the area appear to lack the foresight and ability to put a well-formulated plan together and carry it out. The economic circumstances of the subjects interviewed may be summarized as follows. About ten of the families are quite well established, are living rather comfortably and are in a position where they will soon, if their ambition and favorable circumstances hold, move into a higher income bracket. These families are now in a position where each effort will show a greater gain than ever was the case before.

Ranking below this group is a group of about 15 families who are difficult to label. Their farms are not, for the most part, financially productive. However, they are supplementing their farm income with income from seasonal jobs. With these two sources of income most of these families are making gradual gains. For many this takes the form of keeping all heifer calves in an attempt to build up their cattle herds. This necessitates opening more land and consequently most are working on some clearing of land. They will have to continue to pour funds and work into their farms without receiving a substantial return. The process could be speeded up considerably by the intelligent use of credit but most of these families are reluctant to apply for loans. In this group of about 15 there are only about four that are perhaps rather poor risks.

Another group with relatively poor farm prospects numbers twenty. Half of these families make few excuses for their position and work diligently. They are determined to stick it out and make a go of it; however, their ascent must necessarily be slow. They are frightened of credit - many could not get a loan anyway - they are poor managers and they work consistently, but in-

efficiently. Nevertheless, they will likely persevere and they will eventually have something to show for their labors, whether or not they are helped in any way. They will, by the time they are 65, have a farm which is at last able to support a family.

The other half of this group appears to be in serious trouble. They have shown themselves to be poor managers and some cannot even verbalize a plan that is workable. Many of the excuses they offer for not having successful farms appear merely to be rationalizations of their inability to manage the farm. One farmer reported that bears had ruined his wheat crop and another said that rodents had destroyed his crop. There are also innumerable bad weather stories to be heard from members of this group. Some of these stories may be true to some degree, but they do not explain why other farmers are not so afflicted, even though they may be living on the next quarter.

There are about 10 families in the area who fall squarely into the "severely depressed" category. Four of these families are still quite young (under 35) and are classic examples of the welfare poor. They all have more children than they could possibly look after. They drink considerably and leave the children unattended for hours and sometimes days. Three of these families are just living off the land and are not farming it so that an outside job is necessary although they seldom have one. These three families are on welfare or have been (one of them for five years). The older members of this group seem to have almost completely resigned themselves to their situation. They make just enough to get by on, but periodically they get inspiration and make a step or two. Unfortunately, they become disappointed at the first sign of trouble and slip back to their old patterns.

With the exception of some 20 families, the men in the area give some promise, once they devote themselves to the task, of making a success of farming.

However, one of the obstacles that has not been explicitly mentioned is the men's persistence in trying to make at least half their income from bushwork. This is a tradition that dies hard. Most of the men in the area have been raised on bushwork, and such work is nearly always available. The only difficulty is that there is very little money in this type of work. Several farmers have small lumber mills, which keeps them working but does not show much return; thus, even though they are not working off their farms, their time is spent inefficiently and the farm proper is not being improved. Part of the difficulty lies with tradition but it is only part of the problem. Most important is the fact that the farms are not set up so that they will yield a sufficient return and it is nearly impossible for many to get enough capital to build up an economical farm unit.

It should be emphasized that Niton farmers are not different from farmers across the province who are making a success of farming. The farmers of the Niton area are capable of making similar progress. The kind of progress that will be made however will be far from optimal. This is partly due to the limited facilities which exist for providing adult education in agricultural techniques.

It should be emphasized that the poor in the area are well aware of their special circumstances. After all, not all farmers are poor and, via farm programs and magazines, it is impossible not to realize the potentials farming holds. Formerly excuses would be found in the nature of the area - its weather conditions, soils, etc. There are now enough farmers in the area who are making giant strides so that others are beginning to feel that they also have a good chance.

In large part the Dutch people who have moved into the area are the successful farmers. They were trained in agriculture in the old country and they know what they are doing. Many of them have, in a few years, made productive farms out of places where former owners were not able to earn a living. This kind of example is quite a stimulus and it is likely part of the

reason for the resentment many expressed toward the Dutch.

Such examples have made those who are not doing too well rather sensitive about their position and there is a tremendous outcry whenever anyone calls the area depressed or poverty stricken. Nevertheless, this kind of identification has been made and it has served to strengthen the defences many of the people have built up and without which they would be a lot less comfortable. These defences are seen in common use of the phrase "the so-called standard of living", and in extolling the country life a bit too enthusiastically.

Social Organization: Social Interaction

The organizational structure of the interview area seems to be underdeveloped when compared to other rural communities. One primary reason for this lack of development is the area's relative isolation from the pulp mills, construction, and other industries which makes it necessary for many to leave their communities in search of work. Moreover, since there is no industrial base within the area and since the farm population is insufficient to support many business endeavors, the people in the area must depend for their supplies and for nearly all other business transactions on larger centers. This dependency, both for income and goods, is detrimental to community feeling. Indeed, a rather dismayed "What's here?" is common.

Furthermore, since there are few well educated men in the area, either in government or business, the population does not have the diversity that is characteristic of other areas. Accordingly, there is little cross-fertilization of ideas and there is little strong potential leadership. When asked to identify those with the most influence in their communities most people had to be prompted and even then they had difficulty in naming more than two without stretching the meaning of "influence". Indeed, many could not think of any. Most people expressed the opinion that, "Everyone is about the same". Laudable as such a sentiment may be from some perspectives it is unfortunate when it denotes a nearly universal failure to become interested in and work toward the betterment of one's community.

However, the difficulty is not entirely attributable to the people. A further important factor is the unobtrusive quality of some of the area's problems. For example, all communities are faced with the problem of providing for the energies of children, youth, and even of adults if their leisure time is to be spent creatively, or at least not destructively. In more populous communities such problems are more immediately obvious but in

communities such as Niton they are less so since, in the first place, the population is relatively small. Secondly, in the absence of significant community centers some problems remain unseen. Thus the signs of a dissatisfied and restless mood among the youth are witnessed by the larger centers and are not recognized as being a problem belonging to the smaller area as well.

Most communities which have had the benefit of a diverse and stable population have evolved many organizations which attempt to cope with local problems and which add a variety of opportunities and activities to community life. Of these organizations some, at least, are able to recognize and meet the challenge of new problems. Unfortunately, such organizations do not arise in a vacuum; there are several conditions which must be met before organizations can thrive. The Niton area is deficient in at least three important requisite conditions for organizational growth. The area suffers from a lack of diversity, both economically and socially; there is little independence; and population instability has been the rule.

At the present time there are only three such organizations in the area and all three are largely inconsequential. There are two locals of the Farmers' Union - one a fairly active club and the other existing in name only - and the Women's Institute which is represented by one active club and two which are almost defunct. In addition to these organizations the school system has inadvertently been responsible for an increase in cohesiveness in the area. In 1965 school authorities wanted to close the high school at Niton Junction and to bus all the children to Edson and Evansburg. The people of the Niton area were adamant in their objection to seeing the school closed and they managed to get the decision postponed for a year or two: however the issue is not yet settled.

Unfortunately, the consensus reached on the school issue is a rarity as there is little community feeling and surprisingly little community solidarity, or even mutual tolerance. Gossip and jealousy appear to fractionate any community feeling that may develop. The researchers' impression was that jealousy and ill feeling may be for some a defense against feelings of personal ineptitude. Many do not like to see their neighbors getting ahead, for such progress calls their own position into question. This resentful and defensive pattern seems to be characteristic of the less prosperous members of the community.

Indeed, the antagonism and jealousy toward others in the community is a further factor in hindering organizational growth and community feeling.

In addition to the area's lack of diversity, independence, and stability, it is necessary to add poor interpersonal relations as an important hindering factor. Consensus is difficult to obtain on even simple community matters. Moreover, the people have very little experience with organizations. They are not integrated into national institutions and their profound distrust of government and officialdom spreads over into the local organizational structure. Thus, in one of the Farmers' Union Locals a very able and intelligent president does not get the support he deserves because the people feel he is "just trying to run things". This president is hard working and capable and he has the community's interests at heart. However, rather than being seen as an active agent working toward community betterment he is seen by many as a personal threat.

This lack of community spirit even spreads into activities for children. There are no organized baseball, hockey, or other sport activities for children in the area. There are no clubs or group activities for children. There are no sports days organized for them. The town of Wildwood with a population of 400 (about 10 miles east of the interview area) is similarly devoid of sports activities for children or adults.

Three churches in the area provide a few group activities but on the whole they are not strong. The Christian Reformed Church is certainly the most active. Our impression is that almost every person of Dutch origin in the area attends church regularly and that the level of devotion in the group is high. There are some 20 to 25 families in this church, which is located in Peers. Although Christian Reformed Churches normally have ordained ministers the Peers church does not and instead uses a system of rotating lay preachers. Such a system undoubtedly serves to strengthen the ties to the church, as each member has some responsibility in insuring its continued viability. In addition, the church sponsors a young Dutch people's meeting each Sunday which seems to consist of religious discussions and talks.

There is a Roman Catholic Church at Nojack which has services every week during the summer but none in the winter. Only four or five families attend and there are no church activities besides the mass. There is a United Church in Peers which has weekly services but is not very active otherwise.

Summary of Background Material

The Niton area has the necessary soil and weather conditions to become potential cattle country. Adequate rainfall, soils suitable to grass and legume production, and a sufficient frost-free period make livestock

production an attractive business. However, at the present stage of its development the agricultural sector of the economy is weak. Nearly 70% of the area's farmers hold jobs off the farm with the result that the farms stay small and under-developed and farm incomes remain low. Indeed, many, especially in the over 55 years of age group, are financially distressed. Many changes will have to be made if the area is to live up to its potential. Operators must make better use of modern technology, efficacious farm management practices, agricultural extension services, and credit facilities. However, only fairly large farmsteads can make use of such innovations. Accordingly, many farmers will find it necessary to expand. Others, who are poor farmers to begin with, will have to find other means of earning a living. For those who are young enough and who are presently unqualified for other employment there is a program under ARDA whereby they can be trained. For many the lack of mobility, due to low educational levels, must be overcome.

Some of these changes will soon be possible as the trend toward larger farms continues. Expansion in some cases can be achieved through the settlement of new land, in other cases land can be purchased from others.

One important factor which will allow better development of the area is population stability. The mobility of the settlers has declined in recent years and more of those who are staying are making serious attempts to farm. Further, those people who are seriously attempting to farm have a stake in the community and are beginning to work towards its improvement. However, it is unlikely that the area will ever have a sufficient population base to support much larger community centers. The trend toward larger farms and the green areas which surround the region will likely result in even fewer people.

It is likely that larger centers will continue to provide most of the area's services. However, farm clubs and organizations for children should be possible as the area becomes more prosperous and off-farm employment declines.

At the present time the area is still in the pioneering stage but it is without the pioneering spirit. The potential is there but the area will not prosper without substantial economic aid.

CHAPTER V

THE RESIDENT

In the Niton area, a total of 122 residents were interviewed.¹ On the basis of the data obtained by the questionnaire schedules, it is possible to describe the general social characteristics of the sample. This description is structured in terms of several basic dimensions.

Sex, Age and Marital Status

In terms of *sex*, the sample consisted of 48% males* and 52% females. All respondents except 4 men and 4 women operated their farms with a partner, either a spouse, a parent or a sibling.

In terms of *age*, respondents were all of adult status. Two thirds (66%) were over 40 years of age. Contrary to expectation, the proportion of women in the older age group (32%) was less than the proportion of men (34%), in spite of the fact that there were slightly more women than men in the sample as a whole. About a fifth (20%) of the sample were men under 40 years of age, and 14% were women under 40 years of age.

In terms of *marital status*, most of the sample (85%) were married and living with their spouse. About 6% had never been married. Of the remaining 9% (11 individuals), 7 were married but had been divorced or separated, 2 were presently married but had been widowed, and 2 were presently widowed. The data indicate that the Niton sample has a relatively stable and conventional family structure.

Ethnic Origin

Of the six Alberta communities subjected to study, the community of Niton had the *lowest proportion of native born*. Only about two thirds (62%) of respondents in the Niton sample were born in Canada. About 15% were born in southern European countries and about 10% were born in the United States. Seven percent came from Slavic countries and 3% from the white Commonwealth. One individual was a Metis.

*To facilitate easy reading, all percentages in this section have been rounded off to the nearest whole percentage.

In terms of *birth place of parents*, about a quarter of the fathers and a third of the mothers were born in Canada. About a third came from the United States or the white Commonwealth and about 15% came from southern European countries.

In summary, respondents in the Niton area were *white* and of European origin. About 12% were fourth generation Canadian, 22% were third generation by at least one grandparent and over a third (37%) were second generation by at least one parent.

Geographical Data

The respondents in the Niton sample are *fairly mobile*, in the geographical sense, when compared with respondents in other communities subjected to study. Other studies indicate that nearly one fifth (18%) of the respondents have always lived in the same place in Alberta and another third (34%) have always lived in Alberta. However, even when service in the armed forces is not considered as 'living' outside the province, nearly half (48%) of the Niton sample have lived somewhere other than Alberta at some time in their lives.

Most of the sample (78%) have either always lived on a farm, or have spent most of their life on a farm. However, all but 15% have moved at some time since they were twelve (including 'moves' involving service in the armed forces). About a quarter (26%) have moved at least once, 31% have moved twice, and 14% have moved three times. Five percent of the sample have moved more than eight times since they were eight years old.

Educational Level

One respondent in the Niton area reported having no education. All other respondents reported at least 3 years of schooling. About 8% reported only 4 to 6 years and about *half* (51%) reported *7 to 8 years of schooling*. 16% had their Grade Nine and about 15% had Grade Ten and/or Grade Eleven. Only 8% had 12 years of schooling.* One person had some college, and one person had a college degree.

Most respondents (74%) had *no training outside of public school*. About 7% had some agricultural training, 5% had some business school, 5% had an apprenticeship in a craft or trade and 4% had some mechanical training.

*This does not necessarily mean that the respondent attained high school graduation or matriculation, but simply that he attended school for a period of 12 years.

As was expected, the educational level of the parents of respondents was generally lower than for the respondents themselves. There was a higher proportion with no education and smaller proportions attaining high school entrance.

Occupational Data

The occupational level of respondents in the Niton sample was assessed, and respondents were grouped, according to the Index of Social Position developed by A. B. Hollingshead. The Hollingshead Index is based primarily upon two criteria: the kind of occupation in which an individual is engaged* and the value of property which an individual owns. In the case of the Niton sample, however, the occupation of almost all respondents was farming. The basis for differentiation among respondents was therefore in terms of the value of their farms. Hollingshead's Class Five includes farms worth less than \$10,000; Class Four farms worth from \$10,000 to \$20,000; Class Three farms worth from \$20,000 to \$50,000; and Classes One and Two farms worth from \$50,000 to over \$125,000, depending on size of farm. A more specific description of the class categories is given in Table 1.

More than a third (36%) of farmers in the Niton district did not own their own farms or a significant amount of farm equipment, and were classed in the lowest classes Six and Seven. About 14% had farms worth less than \$10,000. The modal category (25%) for respondents was Class Four, indicating property worth from \$10,000 to \$20,000. Less than a fifth of respondents (18%) had property worth from \$20,000 to \$50,000 and only 8% had property valued at from \$50,000 to \$125,000. No one in the Niton sample was classified in the first level of the upper class. Most respondents were lower class or lower-middle class, in terms of occupational data.

*Respondents are classified according to the occupation in which they have been involved for the longest period of time.

CHAPTER V , TABLE 1.

Occupational Status of Respondents in
the Niton Sample, as Measured by the
Hollingshead Index of Social Position*

Group No.	Description of Occupational Group	Proportion of Sample
1	Higher executives of large concerns (value over \$500,000); Proprietors (value over \$125,000); Major professionals.	--
2	Business managers of large concerns (value over \$500,000); Proprietors (value \$50,000 to \$125,000); Lesser professionals.	8%
3	Administrative personnel; small business owners (value \$10,000 to \$50,000); Semi-professionals; <i>Farm and ranch owners (value \$20,000 to \$50,000)</i>	18%
4	Clerical and sales workers; Technicians; Owners of little businesses (value \$5,000 to \$10,000); <i>Farm and ranch owners (value \$10,000 to \$20,000)</i>	25%
5	Skilled manual employees; <i>Small farmers (owner's value under \$10,000 and tenants who own farm equipment)</i>	14%
6	Machine operators and semi-skilled employees; <i>Farmers (smaller tenants who own little equipment)</i>	21%
7	Unskilled employees; <i>Farmers (share croppers)</i>	14%

*Married female respondents were classified according to the occupational status of their husbands.

FOOTNOTE:

¹For questionnaire construction and interview procedure, see Chapter I of the General Report by Dr. Charles W. Hobart.

CHAPTER VI

THE FARM

Type of Farm

The *majority* of farms in the Niton district (76%) are *mixed farms*. About 9% are cattle ranches, 6% are livestock farms, 6% are dairy farms and only 4% are straight grain farms.

Size of Farm

The size of farm includes all of the land that is owned by the farmer or merely rented by him. About a fifth (20%) of the farms in the Niton sample have less than 250 acres of land. The modal size of farm in the district is from 250 to 500 acres. More than half (52%) of the farms fall into this category. About a fifth (18%) of the farms are somewhat larger, having from 500 to 750 acres. About 8% consist of from 750 to 1000 acres and one farm in the sample was over three sections in size.

Most farmers in the Niton district (71%) farm no *rented land*, and about a fifth (22%) rent less than 250 acres. About 7% rent from 250 to 500 acres and no farmer in the district rents more than 500 acres of land.

CHAPTER VII

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Value of Holdings

The *cash value of farms* in the Niton district was taken as the total price which the farmer would accept for all of his farm property, his land, buildings, machinery, livestock, everything. One farm was valued at less than \$1,500 and a quarter (25%) were valued from \$1,500 to \$10,000. The *modal category* of cash value of farms in the Niton district was from \$10,000 to \$25,000; or 44% of the farms. About 17% were valued from \$25,000 to \$50,000, 7% were valued from \$50,000 to \$75,000. Three were worth from \$75,000 to \$100,000 and one was reported worth over \$350,000.

Farmers were not asked to estimate the *value of livestock* on their farms. Instead, the total number of various kinds of livestock was ascertained and their worth was estimated on the basis of average values. Only 5% of farmers in the Niton district do not own any livestock, about 14% own less than \$1,000 worth and another 15% own from \$1,000 to \$2,000 worth. More than a quarter (28%) own from \$2,000 to \$5,000 worth of livestock and another quarter (23%) own from \$5,000 to \$10,000 worth. About 13% of farmers have from \$10,000 to \$20,000 worth of livestock and 2% (one farmer) has livestock worth from \$20,000 to \$50,000.

Farmers were asked to estimate the *value of machinery* on their farms. Only 5% had no machinery, about a fifth (20%) valued their machinery at less than \$1,000 and another fifth (20%) valued it from \$1,000 to \$2,000. More than a quarter (27%) had from \$2,000 to \$5,000 worth of machinery, and about 17% had from \$5,000 to \$10,000 worth. About 9% had from \$10,000 to \$20,000 worth, and one farmer had from \$20,000 to \$50,000 invested in machinery.

Debts

About 15% of farmers in the Niton district report having no debts at all.* One quarter (25%) have less than \$1,000 worth, more than a third (36%) are from \$1,000 to \$2,000 in debt and another 10% are from \$2,000 to \$5,000 in debt. About 5% have debts from \$5,000 to \$10,000, 6% have debts from

*Figures include farm mortgages.

\$10,000 to \$25,000 and one farmer is in debt from \$25,000 to \$50,000.

Most farmers (72%) pay less than 6% interest on their loans. About 8% pay up to 7% interest, and 2% of farmers pay up to 8% interest. Some 6% pay from 10% to 15%, and another 6% pay more than 15% interest.

Forty percent of farmers who are in debt expect to be debt-free within a year and another 14% expect to be out of debt within two years. About 16% should be free of debts within 5 years and another 4% expect to be clear within 10 years. Nearly a quarter of the farmers in the Niton district (24%) do not expect to be out of debt for a period ranging from 10 years to (in one case) more than 30 years.

Financial Difficulties

All farmers in the Niton area who were in debt reported some *difficulty in making debt payments*. About 5% said they were presently having trouble and another 5% said they had trouble all the time. More than a quarter (29%) had had difficulty at least once within the last 2 years and nearly half (48%) had had difficulty twice or more within the last 2 years. About 14% had had difficulty in making debt payments from 3 to 5 years ago.

Of those people who had difficulty making payments, most (90%) handled their difficulty by simply postponing their payments and contributing as much as they could. About 10% did without other things, 10% worked off the farm to earn extra money, and another 10% allowed belongings to be repossessed. Five percent reported that they handled their debt difficulties by liquidating capital, and 5% reported they were still coping with debt difficulties.

Of those respondents with debts, more than a third (37%) reported that they did not *worry about their debts*, and another 14% said they only worried a little. About 3% were 'somewhat' concerned and 6% said they would worry if the debts got too large. Nearly a third (32%) said they were worried and another 7% said that they worried a 'great deal'.

About two thirds (68%) of farmers in the Niton district would definitely *want to borrow money* if it were available, and another 3% would want to borrow money under certain conditions. Nearly a quarter (22%) would definitely not want to borrow money and another 5% would not want to borrow except under certain conditions.

Most farmers (80%) were successful the last time they *tried to borrow money* on their farm. Of the 20% who were unsuccessful, 5% tried to borrow from \$500 to \$4,000, 3% tried to borrow from \$4,000 to \$8,000, 7% tried to

borrow from \$8,000 to \$12,000 and 3% tried to borrow more than \$12,000.

Productivity and Expansion

About 17% of farmers who have been farming for at least 10 years are farming the same *amount of land* as they were 10 years ago. About a quarter (25%) farm up to 20% more land now than 10 years ago and another 22% farm from 20 to 45% more. About 9% farm from 45% to 75% more land, another 9% farm from 75% to 100% more land and 14% farm more than twice as much land as they did 10 years ago. Only 6% of farmers in the Niton district farm less land now than they did 10 years ago.

About a fifth of the farmers in the Niton district (20%) had not had their *land taxes increased* during the past 3 years. About a fifth (22%) have had them increased by less than 10% and more than a quarter (28%) have had them increased by from 10% to 25%. About 11% pay from 25% to 35% more than 3 years ago and another 7% pay from 35% to 100% more. Thirteen percent of farmers in the Niton district have actually experienced a decrease in taxes during the past 3 years.

When farmers of the Niton district were asked how well they were doing, only 11% replied 'very well', and 43% replied 'quite well'. About 15% felt they were average, 17% said 'not very well' and 13% felt they were doing poorly. Thus, nearly a third felt they were not doing well.

When respondents were asked if they had had: "any particular problems, handicaps or troubles that have held you back from getting ahead as well as you otherwise might have," more than a quarter (27%) said they had had no such troubles. About a third (33%) said they had had health problems, more than a fifth (21%) said they had been handicapped by lack of capital and nearly a fifth (17%) said that external circumstances, most often weather, had been a problem.

The Problem of Farm Help

Only a quarter (26%) of farmers in the Niton sample managed to run their farms without any help. Three kinds of help were available: family members or partners, hired part-time or seasonal, and hired full-time and permanent. In more than a quarter of the cases (27%), the farmer was helped by a family member or partner, and in another 15% of the cases he was helped by two or more such people. In 10% of the farms, only part-time or seasonal help was employed, and in 9% of the cases permanent, both family and seasonal, help was used. In contrast to the other areas studied, no one in the Niton

district had permanent, full-time farm help.

Most farmers (80%) reported that they do *not* need additional farm help. Of those who *do* need additional help, almost all (17%) could not pay for it. Only 2% said that, although they needed help and could pay for it, it was not available.

Non-farm Work and Off-farm Work

Over one half (62%) of the farmers in the Niton sample were *not* employed off the farm during the last three years. About 19% worked off the farm at some time during the last three years and about 19% did so during all three of the last three years.

About half (51%) of the farmers who worked off their farms were employed by a private company and about 29% were employed by government agencies. About 4% were employed by other farmers, 7% by the county or the school board, 2% by hospitals and 2% by relatives. Four were self-employed.

Of those farmers in the Niton area who are employed off their farms, a quarter travel less than 5 miles to work, and another 15% travel between 5 and 10 miles. More than a quarter (28%) work between 10 and 40 miles from their homes. About 8% find work from 60 to 100 miles away from their homes, 2% find work from 100 to 150 miles away and 5% find work from 150 to 200 miles away. One seventh (15%) of Niton area farmers who want to work off their farms must go over 200 miles from their homes to find employment.

The *type of employment* obtained by off-farm workers was classified according to the Hollingshead Index of Social Position, given in Chapter VI, Table 1. Of all of the farmers in the Niton district who had off-farm employment, about 30% were involved in unskilled labor or share-cropping and were classified in Hollingshead's seventh (and lowest) class. About half of these farmers (46%) were involved in general farm work as semi-skilled employees and machine operators and were classified in Hollingshead's sixth class. Seven percent were classified as skilled manual employees (fifth class), 11% were classified as clerical and sales workers, technicians or small business owners (fourth class) and 7% were classed as business managers or lesser professionals (second class).

In terms of the *amount of time spent working off the farm*, more than a quarter (27%) of those farmers who worked were away from their farms for less than 3 months a year, more than a third (40%) were away from their farms from 3 to 6 months a year and about a third (32%) spent more time working off their farms than they did farming their own land.

In terms of *money earned*, a quarter of those farmers who had off-farm employment earned less than \$500. More than a third (39%) earned from \$500 to \$2,000 and another quarter (27%) earned from \$2,000 to \$4,000. Only 7% made from \$4,000 to \$5,000 and only 2% made from \$5,000 to \$6,000.

Almost all respondents in the Niton district who did not have off-farm employment (92%) reported *no desire for off-farm work*. The 8% who said they did want off-farm work were not actively seeking to find it.

In terms of *opportunity for work*, only 23% of the women and 50% of the men reported that jobs were available in their community. Nearly two thirds of the respondents (62%) reported that the *distance to the available jobs* was from 10 to 40 miles. About 15% reported jobs were available within 10 miles of their home. About a fifth (22%) reported no jobs closer than 40 to 100 miles away and one respondent said he would have to go from 100 to 150 miles from his farm.

Income

In the Niton district, *the main source of income* for more than half the respondents (55%) was from the sale of farm goods. For more than a third of the respondents (35%), wages (salary, commissions, custom work) provided the main source of income. About 7% were self-employed, 2% were supported by pensions and 2% were supported by cash contributions (i.e. family allowance, money from relatives or children, alimony).

Nearly a fifth (18%) of respondents in the Niton district reported either that they had had no net income for the past year, or that they had gone further into debt. Twelve percent reported a net family income of less than \$1,000. The *modal amount of net family income for 1965* was between \$1,000 and \$2,000. About 30% of respondents fell into this category. A quarter (25%) reported incomes from \$2,000 to \$3,000, 10% reported net family incomes from \$3,000 to \$4,000, less than 4% had a net income from \$5,000 to \$8,000 and two respondents had net incomes of between \$8,000 and \$12,000.

CHAPTER VIII

PLANS AND ASPIRATIONS

Present Plans for Farm Improvements

When respondents were asked about their *plans for farm improvement*, the main area of interest was in land clearing and improvement, followed by building improvements and livestock additions. When asked about what *improvements they would like to be able to make*, house improvements were mentioned as an additional major area of concern. The data are found in Table 1. There are consistently large discrepancies between actual and desired plans, indicating aspirations far beyond available means and probably, therefore, a fairly high level of dissatisfaction.

CHAPTER VIII, TABLE 1

Actual and Desired Plans for Farm Improvement of Niton Sample Members

Type of Improvement	% who are planning the improvement	% who would like to make improvement
Land clearing and improving	38%	58%
Land additions	2%	9%
Building improvements (not house)	10%	58%
House improvements	6%	58%
Machinery	3%	13%
Livestock	10%	88%
Other	6%	20%

One third (33%) of farmers with specific plans for farm improvement intended to finance the improvements by loans. A fifth (20%) intended to save and about 11% intended to use cash profits. Nine per cent intended to finance improvements with money from other sources and the remaining respondents had no specific source in mind.

Of all farmers who had plans for improvements to be made on their farms, only 16% had applied for financial assistance and only a third of these (6%) had been successful. Those who had not applied for financial assistance offered a variety of reasons. More than a third (37%) wanted to finance the

improvement themselves and avoid debt and one fifth (20%) felt that they could not use the loan immediately. About 16% said they were already too much in debt. One in ten did not really want to make the improvements, for such reasons as 'too old', 'doesn't want to invest in this place', 'place doesn't really need it.'

Almost all respondents who mentioned improvements they would *like* to make were either *very* confident (60%) or *quite* confident (38%) that their plans for improvements would "pay off" and enable them to earn a better living.

Half of the respondents (51%) had not discussed their plans with anybody, and another 40% had only discussed them with relatives. Only about 6% had talked to finance people and less than 2% had consulted a District Agriculturist or other 'knowledgeable person'.

Present Plans for Moving

In terms of *plans to move*, three quarters of the Niton sample (75%) do not want to move and do not plan to do so. Seven percent of the sample want to move and are planning to do so. The remaining 18% report inconsistent and puzzling responses. Although they would like to move, and apparently would be able to, they have made no plans to move. In summary: about a quarter of respondents in the Niton sample (25%) would like to move, 7% of whom are actually planning to move.

Of the 18 respondents in the Niton sample who would like to and/or are planning to move, 6 wanted to move to an Alberta city, and 4 wanted to move to B. C. Others wanted to move to other parts of Canada, or did not know exactly where they wanted to go. No one wanted to move outside of Canada.

Moving Plans With Financial Assistance

Respondents were given the following hypothetical opportunity:

"If you were given some financial help (for example, a loan which you would repay in part) to get you set up so that you could earn a better living, would you want to use that help to move away somewhere else, or would you want to put more of an investment into this farm?"

Almost all farm respondents in the Niton sample (85%) said they would take the money, would stay on the same farm, and would use the money to make improvements and pay off their debts. Only five farmers, 9% of the total, said they would move to another district and 3 farmers said vaguely that they would do something other than farming. Only one farmer said he would *not* take the money, as compared with more than a third of the farmers in the Innisfail sample.

Hypothetical 'Plans'

Respondents were presented with the question: "If you could do anything you wanted, what kind of work would you like to do?" Almost all of the *men* (85%) were apparently content with the *status quo*, at least in terms of occupation. They were presently farmers and they replied that they would want to remain farmers. Eight percent said they would like skilled manual work, 3% said they would like white collar work and another 3% said they would prefer unskilled manual work.

More than half of the *women* (53%) said they would most like to be housewives, about a third (32%) said they would like to do white collar work and more than a tenth (13%) said they would like skilled manual work. One person replied that she would prefer to do unskilled manual labor.

CHAPTER VIII, TABLE 2

Reasons for Choosing "Most Wanted Occupation",
given by Niton Sample Members

Predominant Reason	% of Respondents
In terms of the work <i>per se</i> :	70%
"I like or enjoy that type of work"	37
"I'm suited for it"	1
"It's in my blood" (brought up in it, always wanted to do it, it's best for me)	16
"It's close to nature (outdoors, soil, animals)	10
"Variety, interesting, always different"	3
"Want to learn new things"	1
"Like to build or create or discover, like to see things grow"	--
"Find it a challenge"	2
"Worthwhile and rewarding, satisfying to me"	--
In terms of secondary gains:	26%
"Sociable job, like travelling and meeting people"	5
"Better working conditions"	7
"Independence, you are your own boss"	12
"More money"	2
"No responsibility, straight 8-hour-day job"	--
"Health"	1
In terms of altruistic motives:	2%
"Want to help others, look after others"	1
"For benefit of family"	--
In terms of negative motives:	3%
"Stuck with it, can't do anything else, too old"	3

The fact that most respondents appeared to be content with the *status quo* in terms of occupation does not necessarily mean that respondents had no mobility aspirations. Farmers might be very interested in being better

farmers and in 'getting ahead' without wishing to attain a higher status occupation than farming.

After respondents had indicated the occupation they would choose if they could do anything they wanted, they were asked simply: "Why?" The various reasons which were offered are given in Table 2. Considerations of the nature of the work *per se* appear to be far more important than secondary gains derived from the work.

Although three quarters (72%) of the sample expressed no interest in changing their occupation, nearly a fifth (19%) were interested in changing their occupation - but not in taking additional training to do so - and another 9% said they would like to both change their occupation and take additional training. Of the 9 respondents who wanted more education, 7 said they would definitely need financial help and another said he might need help.

CHAPTER IX

HOME AND FAMILY

Housing Conditions

Standards of housing were measured by the Edward's Housing Scale, which was somewhat modified by the addition of three new items.¹ The scale consisted of a list of 30 items which would be found in a fully equipped, modern home, and houses were scored according to the number of these items in the house, to a maximum score of 30. Houses were then classified into three groups: low or substandard (score from 0 to 11); medium (score from 12 to 22); and high (score from 23 to 30). In the Niton sample, most houses (83%) were classified as medium, about 6% were substandard and 10% were classified as high. No houses scored above 27 points. Housing on farms in the Niton district is considerably less adequate than housing on farms in more prosperous areas. For example, in the Innisfail sample, three quarters of the houses were classified as high and a third of these were in the 27 to 30 point range.

In terms of the *number of people per room* of living space, 41% of respondents in the Niton district reported less than one person per room and another 16% reported exactly one person per room. About a third (31%) reported from one to two people per room and one family reported more than five people per room of living space.

Family Size

The data relevant to family size are presented in Table 1. The distribution of *number of children born* tends to be bimodal, rather than normal, with 31% of the respondents having 2 or 3 children, and 28% of the respondents having 5 or 6 children. The distribution of *number of children living* reflects the same pattern, with small changes in proportions in the expected directions. The *number of children born to mothers of sample members* was, as expected, greater than the number of children born to sample members. This indicates that the *average family size is becoming smaller*. The amount of the reduction is probably less than is implied by the statistics for two reasons: one, not all of the women of the previous generation are represented, but only mothers of children who lived to adulthood; and two, about a quarter

of mothers of the previous generation bore at least one child who died before the age of twelve.

CHAPTER IX, TABLE 1

Proportion of Niton Respondents Having
or Wanting Various Numbers of Children

Number of Children	Number of Living Children	Total Number of Children Born	Total Number of Mother's Children*	Ideal Number of Children
None	6%	8%	--	1%
One	11%	9%	4%	0
Two	14%	14%	8%	11%
Three	17%	12%	11%	16%
Four	9%	9%	15%	39%
Five	12%	15%	17%	9%
Six	14%	9%	12%	12%
Seven	3%	6%	7%	6%
Eight +	14%	17%	26%	7%**
	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Refers to number of children born, including those who died before the age of 12 years.

**Includes general responses as: "as many as we can afford," "not less than 4," "as many as we are able to have."

Respondents were asked what they felt was the *ideal number of children*. The modal category of response, involving 39% of the sample, was 4 children. More than one quarter (27%) thought 2 or 3 children per family was ideal and more than one fifth (21%) thought 5 or 6 was ideal. About 6% thought seven was ideal and another 7% thought a family of 8 or more was to be preferred. Only 11% of respondents considered the two child family to be ideal. The strength of the positive attitudes towards parenthood prevalent in the Niton district is shown by the fact that no one considered one child to be the ideal family size, and only one person felt that no children at all was ideal.

Attitudes Towards Birth Control

Respondents in the Niton sample generally favor birth control. Nearly half (49%) are definitely in favor of it, another third (33%) gave favorable responses but qualified their opinion somewhat, nearly 12% were definitely not in favor, and 4% were not in favor but qualified their opinion

somewhat. About 2% said they did not have an opinion. Although the dominant attitude towards birth control is positive, it is not as pronounced as in some other communities.

Almost half of the respondents (46%) could specify where birth control information was available in the community, and another 4% thought it was available but did not know just where. About 7% said that birth control information was not available in the community and another 3% did not think it was available. Forty percent of respondents in the Niton area said they did not know if birth control information was available or not.

Relative Prosperity

The perception of oneself as being 'rich' or 'poor' depends in part upon one's position regarding wealth and status in the society as a whole. However, this perception also depends upon one's position relative to one's own reference group. A person of only moderate means in a poor area may feel 'rich' and *vice versa*. Given what we know about Thomas' dictum: "A situation defined as real is real in its consequences,"² it is important for any consideration of poverty *versus* affluence to know how people perceive, define, and evaluate their economic state.

One important reference group for people consists of their siblings and siblings-in-law. Respondents were asked to rate the 'state of prosperity' of members of this group compared with their own prosperity. Only 16% of the respondents reported no differences in prosperity among themselves and any of their brothers or brothers-in-law and another 4% reported an equal number of relatives above them in prosperity as below them. Presumably, these two classes of respondents felt neither richer nor poorer than their relatives. In the Niton area, only 12% of respondents reported that all of their brothers or brothers-in-law were below them in prosperity. Five percent reported that more of their relatives were below them than above them. This minority of respondents may perceive of themselves as more prosperous and 'rich' than their actual objective position in the greater society would indicate.

Most of the respondents in the Niton area (52%) are 'poor' when compared to their relatives. More than one fifth (23%) reported that all of their brothers and brothers-in-law were more prosperous than they were and almost one third (32%) reported that more of their relatives were above them than below them. In summary: to the extent that siblings and siblings-in-law are a relevant reference group, the people of the Niton area tend to perceive themselves as 'poor'.

Family Harmony

Respondents were asked what things in their family life they were especially worried about. Most respondents (79%) said they were not worried about anything. Of those who did report worrying, the most common concern was with health problems (7%), finances (5%), the education of children (4%), children getting into trouble (3%), and family upheavals (1%).

The presence of conflict within families in the Niton sample was considered in terms of two points of view: parent-parent conflict and parent-child conflict.

When respondents were asked about *disagreements with their spouse*, more than one quarter (26%) said they had no disagreements. For the rest of the sample, the issues involved were as follows:

Work (i.e. wife working, occupation, husband working too hard.....	19%
Money.....	18%
Children (i.e. discipline, how to bring them up.....	10%
Alcohol, and frequency of drinking.....	2%
Everything, lots of things.....	2%
People, relatives.....	1%
Other.....	22%

Interviewers rated their impressions of the degree of conflict between parents in the homes in which they conducted interviews. In terms of subjective impressions of an outsider, in less than two thirds of the homes (65%), there was almost no conflict, in more than one quarter of the homes (29%) there was a 'little bit', in about 5% there was a 'fair amount' of conflict and in one home there seemed to be a 'great deal' of conflict between the parents.

When respondents were asked about *disagreements with their children*, almost one half (48%) said that they had no disagreements, one third (33%) said they rarely had disagreements and that when they did they were insignificant, 16% said they disagreed 'somewhat' and only 3% said they had serious disagreements. The subject of disagreement was described by subjects who indicated that they did have disagreements as follows:

Discipline and disobedience.....	28%
Work and chores.....	17%
Dating and morals.....	11%
Education and school issues.....	12%
Personal habits, money, etc.	2%
Other.....	30%

Interviewers rated their impressions of the amount of conflict between parents and children in each home in which they conducted an interview, on the basis of what the interviewee had said and the way in which he had said it. In terms of these ratings, in two thirds of the homes in the Niton sample (67%) there was almost no conflict, in 26% there was 'a little bit' of conflict, and

in only 7% was there 'a fair amount' to 'a great deal' of conflict.

Interviewers were also instructed to make a final global rating of the amount of discord in each home in which they interviewed, based on the interviewee's discussion of conflict between the parents, and between the parents and children. Again the discord ratings in the Niton sample were remarkably low. In over two thirds of the homes (68%) the discord was rated as "virtually none"; in 29% of the homes it was rated as "slight", and in only 3% of the homes was it rated as "moderate" to "severe".

Aspirations for Children

Respondents were asked if it was *important for their children to grow up on a farm*. About 13% felt it was very important and nearly half (48%) felt it was quite important. More than one fifth (23%) felt it was 'a little' important and 17% said it was not important at all.

When asked *why* it was important, 38% of those people who considered it important claimed that the farm was a 'good way of life', offering as examples such advantages as freedom, space, pets, high moral standards, and the fact that the farm keeps children busy, and hence out of trouble. About one quarter (24%) felt that it was easier to raise children on a farm (*i.e.* they require less supervision, parents have better control), 12% felt that farm life builds better character (*i.e.* a sense of responsibility) and 10% felt that farm life had educational value.

Of the 20 individuals who did not think it was important for their children to grow up on a farm, 15 did not feel that it really made any difference. Four felt that they would have educational handicaps, and one was concerned with financial limitations.

Respondents were asked if they advise their children to: '*stay in this area and make their homes here*'. One quarter of respondents (26%) refused to answer the question on the grounds that it was not up to them to advise their children to do anything; they felt that the decision was entirely up to the children and they should do as they liked with no interference. About half (51%) said they would advise their children to stay. The most common reason (35%) was that the Niton district was a good area for farming. About 4% referred to conveniences in the area, another 3% mentioned that they wanted their children to be close to their relatives, and about 9% did not specify why they wanted their children to stay.

About one quarter of the respondents in the Niton area said they would *not* advise their children to stay in the district. About half of these

wanted their children to get out of farming, and half thought that they would have a better chance (and a better education) elsewhere.

When respondents were asked what *kind of work* they *wanted for their sons*, more than one third (35%) said farming. One fifth (21%) made general references to 'doing better' and 'getting more education'. More than one quarter (26%) were permissive, saying 'anything he wants'. About 7% wanted their sons to be professionals, 6% wanted them to teach and 5% wanted them to get blue collar jobs. Only 1% wanted their sons to go into business.

When respondents were asked what *kind of work* they *wanted for their daughters*, nearly one third (31%) were permissive, saying 'anything she wants'. Only 6% said that she should be a housewife. More than one quarter (27%) made general references to 'doing better' or 'getting an education'. About 16% said they would like their daughters to be teachers or white collar workers and 14% said they would like them to be nurses or other semi-professionals. About 6% specified clerical or stenographic work and one specified blue collar work. No one in the Niton area had professional aspirations for their daughters.

FOOTNOTES:

¹See questionnaire, page 23, Appendix G.

²Thomas, W. I. and Znaniecki, Florian, The Polish Peasant, (Vol. 1; University of Chicago Press; 1918-1920), page 81.

CHAPTER X

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

Illness and Accidents

Respondents were asked to describe any illnesses, operations or accidents in the family during the past year in terms of who was sick, with what, for how long, how and where the treatment took place, and the outcome of the treatment. Most respondents (60%) reported some health problems for themselves or their families during the past year. A summary of responses in terms of the first ailment mentioned by respondents is given in Table 1. The modal response to each question is underlined. The modal number of ailments per family was one (72% of the sample). In families having ailments, nearly half (48%) involved adults. On the average, families had less than one accident and/or one nervous ailment during the past year. In families with ailments, the modal length of duration of the ailment was one week or less.

Respondents were asked about their own *state of health*. About half (50%) reported that their health during the past three years had been either 'excellent' or 'good'. About 40% said it had been 'fair' and 10% said it had been either 'poor' or 'very poor'. Slightly over half (55%) reported that they had no health problems and another quarter (23%) reported that their health problems did not interfere with their daily activity. Twenty two percent of respondents reported health problems which *did* interfere with their daily activity.

Infant Mortality

In terms of infant mortality, a fifth of the couples (20%) had had one child who died before the age of 12 years and another 5% had had two children who died. Of the 29 children involved, 6 involved miscarriages, 3 were premature and 7 died before the age of 6 months.

Satisfaction with Health Services in the Area

More than half the respondents in the Niton district (56%) had no *complaints about the doctors* in the area. About a quarter (25%) had general, non-specific complaints about performance and another 5% had specific complaints

CHAPTER X, TABLE 1

Summary of the Data for Niton Sample Members Regarding
Family Health (based on the first ailment named) (N=38)

Content of Question	Categories of Response	% of Sample
Who was the <i>sick person</i> ?	Male (15 yrs. and less)	11%
	Male (16 to 24 yrs.)	6%
	Male (25 to 44 yrs.)	26%
	Male (45 yrs. and older)	21%
	Female (15 yrs. and less)	6%
	Female (16 to 24 yrs.)	--
	Female (25 to 44 yrs.)	21%
	Female (45 yrs. and older)	11%
What was the <i>type of ailment</i> ?	Infective and parasitic diseases	3%
	Neoplasms	3%
	Allergic, endocrine system, metabolic and nutritional diseases	13%
	Mental, psychoneurotic and personality disorders	5%
	Diseases of the nervous system and sense organs	5%
	Diseases of the circulatory system	10%
	Diseases of the respiratory system	8%
	Diseases of the digestive system	5%
	Diseases of the genito-urinary system	13%
	<u>Accidents, poisonings, and violence</u>	29%
	Miscellaneous	5%
What was the <i>duration of the ailment</i> ?	<u>One week or less</u>	23%
	One week to two weeks	14%
	Two weeks to three weeks	11%
	Three weeks to a month	11%
	Two to three months	20%
	Four to Six months	6%
	Seven to Nine months	6%
	Chronic, all the time	9%
What was the <i>method of treatment</i> ?	Self	6%
	Family member	3%
	Local medical doctor (G.P.)	33%
	Non-local medical doctor (G.P.)	11%
	Local medical specialist	3%
	<u>Non-local medical specialist</u>	44%
What was the <i>place of treatment</i> ?	Local doctor's office or clinic	16%
	Non-local doctor's office or clinic	6%
	Local hospital	22%
	<u>Edmonton or Calgary hospital</u>	51%
	Home	6%
What was the <i>outcome of treatment</i> ?	<u>Successful</u>	66%
	Doubtful	8%
	Unsuccessful	18%
	Died	3%

referring to incidents. About 12% said there were too few doctors.

Respondents seemed relatively satisfied with *hospital services*.

Only 15 complained that hospitals were too small, were lacking in equipment and supplies or inconveniently located. The remainder made no complaints.

Medical Insurance and Medical Expenses

Subjects were asked whether they had medical expense insurance coverage. More than half (57%) had MSI and another 4% had Blue Cross. About 8% had coverage by pension or welfare and 5% had other medical insurance. *More than one quarter (26%) had no medical expense coverage at all.*

Of the 35 people who had no medical coverage, more than half said they could not afford it. About one fifth said they had applied and would be getting it soon.

For less than two thirds (65%) of the Niton sample, medical bills (excluding the cost of medical insurance premiums) came to less than \$50 during 1965 and for another fifth (18%) the cost was only from \$50 to \$100. Ten percent had medical bills ranging from \$100 to \$250 and about 5% had bills ranging from \$250 to more than \$400.

Most respondents (80%) had the cash to pay their medical bills. The remaining 20% carried their bills by loans, credit, or postponing payments.

Mental Health

One index of mental health is the extent to which individuals experience physical symptoms which probably are psychological in origin. One widely used measure of this phenomenon is a *Symptoms Check List*. Respondents were asked about 14 psychophysiological symptoms, and were scored from 1 to 3 points for each response, depending upon whether they experienced the symptom 'never', 'sometimes', or 'often'. These scores were then summed, making the possible range from 14 to 42. On the basis of norms based on large samples, scores from 14 to 17 were considered 'low', scores from 18 to 21 were considered 'medium' and scores above 21 were considered 'high'. The proportions of respondents in the Niton sample who reported psychophysiological symptoms with varying frequencies is given in Table 2. In this sample, more than one quarter of the respondents (28%) scored low on the Symptoms Check List, more than a third (36%) scored medium, and more than a third (35%) scored high. The distribution for Niton reflects a slightly higher proportion of slightly more neurotic respondents as measured by psychophysiological symptoms than the other communities studied, but the differences are not large.

Respondents were also given a Neuroticism Index which, as shown in Table 3, also took the form of a symptom check list. The proportions of respondents answering in various ways are shown. The scoring procedure was identical to that used for the psychophysiological list, and the cutting points

Proportions of the Niton Sample Reporting
Psychophysiological Symptoms

	<u>often</u>	<u>sometimes</u>	<u>never</u>
1. Has any ill health affected the amount of work you do?	<u>11%</u>	<u>45%</u>	<u>45%</u>
2. Have you ever had spells of dizziness?	<u>12%</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>63%</u>
3. How often are you bothered by having an upset stomach?	<u>12%</u>	<u>46%</u>	<u>42%</u>
4. Are you troubled by your hands sweating so that you feel damp and clammy?	<u>6%</u>	<u>18%</u>	<u>76%</u>
5. Do you have loss of appetite?	<u>4%</u>	<u>26%</u>	<u>71%</u>
6. Do your hands ever tremble enough to bother you?	<u>3%</u>	<u>10%</u>	<u>87%</u>
7. Do you tend to lose weight when you have something important bothering you?	<u>4%</u>	<u>30%</u>	<u>66%</u>
8. Have you ever been bothered by nervousness, feeling fidgety or tense?	<u>26%</u>	<u>57%</u>	<u>17%</u>
9. Have you ever been bothered by shortness of breath when you were not exercising or working hard?	<u>5%</u>	<u>32%</u>	<u>63%</u>
10. For the most part, do you feel healthy enough to carry out the things you would like to do?	<u>50%</u>	<u>38%</u>	<u>12%</u>
11. Are you sometimes bothered by your heart beating hard? (Pounding)	<u>12%</u>	<u>31%</u>	<u>58%</u>
12. Do you feel you are bothered by all sorts of pains and ailments in different parts of your body?	<u>5%</u>	<u>19%</u>	<u>76%</u>
13. Do you ever have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep?	<u>11%</u>	<u>35%</u>	<u>55%</u>
14. Are you bothered by nightmares?	<u>3%</u>	<u>12%</u>	<u>85%</u>

for 'low' (6 to 9), 'medium' (10 to 12), and 'high' (13 to 18) were also based upon standardized norms. In the Niton sample, about 40% scored low on the scale; more than one third (36%) scored in the medium range; and one quarter (25%) scored high. Respondents in the Niton area were slightly less neurotic than respondents in the other communities studied, as measured by the Neuroticism Index.

CHAPTER X , TABLE 3.

Proportions of the Niton Sample
Reporting Neurotic Symptoms

	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>uncertain</u>
15. Do you sometimes feel happy, sometimes depressed, without any apparent reason?	<u>49%</u>	<u>39%</u>	<u>12%</u>
16. Does your mind often wander while you are trying to concentrate?	<u>33%</u>	<u>61%</u>	<u>6%</u>
17. Are you frequently "lost in thought" even when supposed to be taking part in a conversation?	<u>21%</u>	<u>72%</u>	<u>8%</u>
18. Are you sometimes bubbling over with energy and sometimes very sluggish?	<u>50%</u>	<u>41%</u>	<u>10%</u>
19. Are you inclined to be moody?	<u>26%</u>	<u>65%</u>	<u>7%</u>
20. Do you have frequent ups and downs in mood, either with or without apparent reason?	<u>25%</u>	<u>68%</u>	<u>8%</u>

CHAPTER XI

LEISURE

Leisure Activities and Preferences

Respondents were asked *what they did in their leisure time*. For the winter, popular activities (mentioned by at least 15% of respondents) were as follows: reading, handicrafts, working around the house* and spectator sports. For the summer, popular activities (mentioned by at least 15% of respondents) were as follows: working around the house, active and nature activities and spectator sports.

In the winter, the modal amount of time devoted to leisure activities was from 21 to 30 hours (for 29% of the respondents). More than one third (39%) had less than 30 hours a week leisure time and about one third had from 30 to more than 50 hours of leisure time a week. Only 3% of the respondents reported that they had no leisure time.

In the summer, the modal amount of time devoted to leisure activities was from 11 to 20 hours a week (for 32% of the respondents). About one quarter (29%) had less than 11 hours a week and about 15% had from 20 to 30 hours a week leisure time. Only 10% had more than 30 hours a week leisure and 17% reported that they had no leisure time during the summer.

Respondents were asked *what they most liked to do when they were not working*. The most common responses were:

Enjoying nature (hiking, camping car rides, picnics, hunting.....	27%
Working around the house or garden (cooking, sewing above family needs).....	22%
Reading.....	17%
Visiting (going out, entertaining at home, being with people).....	8%
Sleeping or resting.....	7%
Spectator sports.....	5%
Other.....	14%

Respondents were also asked what they liked to do when they got together with friends. About half simply answered: "visit or just talk." When activities were named, the most popular kind involved working together, going out (school and community parties) and church activities.

*This category includes: "housekeeping, cooking, carpentry, gardening, puttering, sewing, mechanics, and helping the children with their homework."

Leisure Activities Involving Sources of Information

The use of leisure time often involves activities which, in addition to being entertaining and/or relaxing and/or time consuming, serve the function of informing the individual about events in the world around him. The most important of such educational leisure-time activities involve reading and watching television.

In terms of *newspapers*, two thirds of respondents in the Niton sample (63%) read one weekly and another fifth (19%) read a weekly and a local paper. Less than 10% read a metropolitan newspaper.

In terms of *magazines*, about 18% of respondents do not read any magazines. Of those who do read magazines, about half (43%) read only one, and half (49%) do not read any magazine with mass circulation.

In terms of *hours spent reading*, in the winter one half of the sample members reported reading from 1/2 an hour to 5 hours a week. No respondent reported not reading at all. In the summer, 36% reported reading from 1/2 an hour to 2 hours a week and 9% of respondents report not reading at all.

Two fifths of the respondents in the Niton area have *no television* set nor access to one. For those who *do have TV*, the modal amount of time spent viewing (24%) is from 11 to 20 hours a week. About 16% watch fewer than 11 hours a week and about 20% watch from 20 to 40 hours a week.

The above leisure-time activities may—or may not—serve as a reliable source of information. Respondents were asked to indicate their sources for 'finding out about things' and the proportions endorsing various sources is shown below. Many of these sources are also mentioned as important leisure time activities:

Radio.....	52%
Television.....	48%
Magazines.....	15%
Movies.....	1%
Talking with people.....	70%
Books.....	12%
Personal experience.....	34%
Church.....	16%
School.....	11%
Newspapers.....	42%

CHAPTER XII

ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Anomie

Anomie, or hopeless despair, was measured by Srole's Anomie Scale, which consists of five questions, as shown in Table 1. Each respondent was given a score of one for each agree response, making a maximum score of 5 indicating a high degree of anomie. The distribution of total scores in the Niton sample is somewhat biased in that, for nearly one quarter of the respondents (24%), questionnaire items were so inadequately answered that no total score could be computed. For the individuals who were scored, the distribution of scores was as follows:

score of one.....	29 cases.....	24%
score of two.....	17 cases.....	14%
score of three.....	19 cases.....	16%
score of four.....	17 cases.....	14%
score of five.....	9 cases.....	8%

CHAPTER XII , TABLE 1.

Responses to Srole Anomie Scale
Items by Niton Sample Respondents

Item	% of sample who agreed
In spite of what some people say, the life of the average man is getting worse not better.	39%
It's hardly fair to bring children into the world with the way things look for the future.	29%
There's little use in writing to government officials because often they aren't really interested in the problems of the average man.	54%
These days a person doesn't really know whom he can count on.	52%
Nowadays, a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.	22%

Attitudes Towards Work: The Protestant Ethic

Attitudes of commitment to work were measured by a Protestant Ethic Scale, which consists of six questions as shown in Table 2. On the first three items, respondents were scored from 1 to 3 for a negative response

and from 4 to 6 for a positive response, depending upon the intensity of their feeling. For the last three items, the scoring was reversed. Thus, the total possible score was 36, and the higher the score, the higher the acceptance of the Protestant Ethic commitment to work values. The distribution of scores for the Niton sample was as follows:

score of 6 to 9.....	1 case.....	1%
score of 10 to 13.....	10 cases.....	9%
score of 14 to 17.....	23 cases.....	20%
score of 18 to 21.....	35 cases.....	30%
score of 22 to 25.....	29 cases.....	25%
score of 26 to 29.....	15 cases.....	13%
score of 30 to 33.....	3 cases.....	3%
score of 34 to 36.....	2 cases.....	2%

Respondents were spread over the entire range of the scoring continuum. Although the distribution is roughly 'normal', it is slightly skewed to the left. Compared to other areas (*e.g.* Innisfail), respondents in the Niton area generally showed a higher degree of commitment to the Protestant Ethic.

Values

The value orientations of respondents were measured by four indices: responses to 22 value items; value scores (based on the value items); factor scores (based on factor analysis of the value items); and two forced choice questions. In the section concerning values in the main report, detailed information is given regarding the theoretical significance of the indices, the rationale for their selection and development and the analysis of inter-community data. Detailed explanations will therefore not be given here beyond the cursory comments necessary to clarify the pattern of the data.

CHAPTER XII , TABLE 2.

Responses to Protestant Ethic Scale
Items, by Niton Sample Members

Item	% of people who gave Prot. Ethic answers
If you had a great deal of money, would you work as much as you do now?	71%
Would you say that the worst thing about being sick is that your work does not get done?	53%
Would you say that you work like a slave at everything you do until you are satisfied with the results?	51%
Would you say that it is all right for a man to take off from work if there is something else he would rather do?	37%
Would you say that most people spend too much time working and not enough time enjoying life?	61%
If you had a choice of taking a paid vacation or working during that time and getting paid extra, would you take the vacation?	14%

Value Items. The proportion of the Niton sample who gave the middle class response to value items is shown in Table 3. The value items (except #7, #12, and #19) were all found to vary significantly from one community to another, as measured by chi square at the .05 level of confidence. However, significant associations with other variables (income, education, occupation, sex) were found for only a few items and did not appear to follow any particular pattern.

Value Scores. Items representing particular dimensions of value orientations were grouped and a summed score was obtained for each respondent. The results were essentially similar as for the value items. Significant associations were found by community, indicating that Niton area respondents tended to give fewer middle class responses than respondents in other interview areas for all value dimensions except the education dimension. Apparently, a high positive value on education is common to all the communities studied.

Factor Scores. The factor scores yielded results similar to those for the value scores. Significant associations of responses and community were found for all factors except education.

Implications. Respondents in the Niton area, like respondents in all of the communities studied, generally answered the value items in the manner expected of middle class people, in the sense that for most items more than 50% of the sample give a middle class response. However, the residents of the Niton district were more apt to give responses which other research shows to be typical of the lower class. All of the value areas (with the exception of education) were found to vary significantly by community, indicating that the Niton area residents did, in fact, answer consistently differently than residents in more prosperous areas. These differences, although small, were in the expected direction. In terms of the discussion regarding middle class and lower class value orientations (which is given in the main section of the report), the data indicates that one could expect residents of the Niton district to more closely approximate the lower class value pattern than comparatively more prosperous areas, such as Innisfail.

Forced Choice Questions. Niton respondents were asked: "If you had your choice, which would you most like to be: successful or independent or well liked?" Most respondents (60%) replied 'well liked'; about one quarter (25%) replied 'independent'; and only 13% replied 'successful'.

CHAPTER XII , TABLE 3.

Proportions of the Niton Sample Giving
Middle Class Responses to Value Items

1. Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today, and let tomorrow take care of itself.	78%
2. What counts in life is being able to feel that you are a success.	74%
3. Getting into trouble with the police now and then is not something to be ashamed of unless you've really done something bad.	54%
4. You can't do much about the world so you might as well learn to put up with things the way they are.	44%
5. The money I save gives me as good a feeling as things I buy.	68%
6. In order to get along in the world, you have to look after your family and friends, and let them look after you.	27%
7. A person ought to be satisfied if he manages to get by without too much effort.	71%
8. If a girl should get 'in trouble' and 'have to get married' she has disgraced herself.	31%
9. If a fellow can get a good job when he finishes school, he is foolish to go to university.	92%
10. The more you try to plan ahead, the more you will be disappointed.	66%
11. Getting ahead in the world is one of the most important things in life.	46%
12. It is better to blow up now and then at someone and tell them off than to bottle your feelings up.	15%
13. For many young people, education past Grade 9 is not worth the time and trouble.	83%
14. To get ahead in the world, a man should be willing to give up old friends and make new ones.	41%
15. If a couple want to live together without being married, that's up to them.	28%
16. A person is responsible only for himself and his wife and children and not for his other relatives.	49%
17. Too many people are so busy planning for tomorrow that they can't really live today.	22%
18. Schooling only makes sense if it helps one to get a good job.	75%
19. If people really go after what they want they can usually get it.	81%
20. Money is made to spend, not to save or invest.	81%
21. Education may be important but lots of people get too carried away with it.	40%
22. Too many people are so concerned with getting ahead that they can't really enjoy life.	19%

Respondents were also asked: "Think of the things which are most important to you. Which three things on this card are the most important to you in the long run?" The proportions of the sample giving first choice to various

values are shown in Table 4. Keeping healthy is apparently most important to residents of the Niton district, followed by family ties and being independent.

CHAPTER XII , TABLE 4.

Proportion of Niton Respondents Choosing
Different Values as 'Most Important'

Value	% of first choice
Keeping healthy and fit	31%
Family ties and relationships	17%
Being independent	14%
Being a just and honest person	10%
Being liked and respected by others	9%
Making money and buying things	5%
Religious activities	5%
Doing things for other people	4%
Being highly skilled in what I do	2%

CHAPTER XIII

THE COMMUNITY

Perceptions of the Community

Most of the Niton interview sample (85%) feel that the Niton district is a 'pretty good' area in which to live. About 8% are undecided, saying it is both 'good and bad'. Three percent say they are used to it and will probably stay and only about 5% do not like it, to the point of wishing they lived elsewhere.

When respondents were asked what they thought of the people in the community, about half (45%) said that they were either 'very good' or 'pretty good' and another third (33%) thought they were about 'average' or 'fair'. About 13% said that there were 'some good, some bad' and about 8% were definitely dissatisfied, feeling that the people were 'no good' and 'had lots of faults'. Compared with other communities studied, the residents of the Niton district do not appear to be particularly satisfied with each other.

Attachments to the Community

Respondents were asked:

"Are there people in this area whom you feel close to or whom you depend upon, like relatives or close friends, who would make it difficult for you to move away because you didn't want to leave them behind?"

Most respondents (61%) said they had no such ties. Nearly one quarter (23%) said they had relatives, 12% said they had friends and 4% said they had both relatives and friends who would make it difficult for them to move away.

Respondents were then asked:

"Are there any other reasons why you would feel badly about leaving this area and moving to another area?"

About half the respondents (49%) said they had no other ties to the area.

Of the 62 respondents who mentioned other reasons, more than three quarters said that they were contented in the district and had involvements in it.

They mentioned such factors as feeling at home in the district, feeling established and proud of their property and wanting to keep their establishment for their children. Four respondents mentioned that they liked the geography of the region and three said they liked farming. Two respondents were moti-

vated to stay because of family concerns and another 2 were motivated by religious reasons. Only 4 respondents reported that their only reasons for wanting to stay in the area were negative ones, involving having no place else to go, or being too old to move.

Friends and Neighbors

Respondents were asked *how many close friends* they had in the district. The modal response (32%) was *two or three*. About 18% had four or five friends and another 17% had six or seven. About 6% reported only one close friend and 11% reported none. About 18% of residents of the Niton district reported having from eight to more than 17 'really close' friends.

Respondents were asked *how often they see their friends*. The modal response (47%) was about *once a week*. About one quarter (25%) saw their friends once every 2 or 3 days and 16% saw them every day. The remaining 10% saw their friends at least once a month.

One indication of feeling and interaction patterns in a community is the sources of help and mutual aid upon which people depend. Respondents were asked: "Who would you feel free to turn to, in time of trouble, when you need help?" The most frequent response, made by 40%, was "neighbors". More than a third (37%) would turn to their family and relatives and another fifth would turn to their friends. Less than 2% said they would have nobody to turn to.

Community Activities: Farm Organizations

The most prominent farm organization in the Niton interview area is the Farmers' Union. However, about 30% of farmers in the Niton area have never belonged to it and another 25% do not belong to it at the present time. Only 45% are currently active members. When respondents were asked why they did not belong to the Farmers' Union, 11% said they just couldn't be bothered and another 11% said they were in favor of individualistic solutions to problems. About 5% found it inconvenient for various reasons and another 6% said no union was available. However, over half (52%) of respondents who do not belong to the FUA expressed negative attitudes towards the FUA itself. The criticisms included: a feeling of futility, a dislike of the meetings or of the leaders, and a disapproval of FUA policy.

Respondents were asked if they would favor some kinds of organization other than the FUA for farmers. Nearly half (43%) said they would, but did not specify the nature of the organization. Another 12% were able to

suggest alternative kinds of organizations.

Community Activities: Church

In terms of *membership* and/or *attendance*, 18% of the sample were associated with the United Church, 15% with conservative Protestant denominations, 14% with liturgical Protestant denominations (Lutheran or Anglican) and 12% with the Catholic Church. Thirty percent of the respondents in the Niton area reported that they neither belonged to a church nor attended one.

In terms of *self-ratings on religious involvement*, 15% said they were 'very religious', about half (48%) said they were 'moderately religious', more than one third (29%) said they were 'not very religious' and about one tenth (9%) said they were 'not at all religious'.

In terms of *regularity of church attendance*, of all church members, more than one quarter (28%) never attend and another quarter (26%) attend only 2 to 3 times a year. About a third (33%) reported that they attend church at least once a week.

In *general* terms, it appears that although religious matters play some part in the lives of most respondents, it is a matter of central concern for only about one quarter. For another quarter religion apparently is of little significance at all.

Community Activities: Politics

In terms of *voting behavior*, 72% of respondents said they had voted in the last provincial election and the last two federal elections. About 3% said they had not voted in any of the three and 12% were not eligible to vote in any of the three.

In terms of *interest* in politics, about half (45%) said they followed federal politics very closely or fairly closely and about half (55%) said they followed provincial politics very closely or fairly closely. About 17% said they did not follow politics at all.

In terms of *knowledge* of politics, about one third (32%) of people could name both their MP and their MLA and another fifth (22%) could name only their MLA. More than a third (37%) could name neither official.

Most people (74%) felt that they would 'certainly' or 'probably' feel free to talk to their MP about the problems of the district. However, less than half (47%) felt that it would 'certainly' or 'probably' do any good.

Community Activities: Other Organizations

Two fifths of respondents in the Niton district do not belong to any organizations and another two fifths belong to only one. About 14% belong to two and about 6% belong to from 3 to 6 organizations.

In terms of *participation* (calculated on the basis of the first organization only) 60% go to every meeting and another 21% go to almost every meeting. About 14% go to about half the meetings. Compared with the Innisfail sample, respondents in the Niton district belong to fewer organizations, but are more involved in those few organizations which they have joined.

In terms of *leadership in community organizations*, 90% had never been an officer in any organization. About one quarter of those respondents who had held an office had had an office in the FUA. One quarter had held an office in some other farm organization and about half had held an office in a service or civic group.

Community Leaders

Respondents were asked to name the five most influential people in the community, their occupation and the way in which they were influential. In terms of *occupation*, almost all (92%) of the leaders named were in Hollingshead's Class Four (*i.e.* farm owners value \$10,000 to \$20,000). The most frequently mentioned way in which they served the community was through 'official' organizations (36%). About one quarter (27%) were said to help farmers directly and about 14% were said to be influential because they were especially competent and effective in getting things done.

Respondents were asked what characteristics they felt a community leader should have. The traits named, in order of frequency of mention, were as follows:

Trustworthy (honest, genuine, sincere, dependable, have integrity, have the interest of the community at heart).
Competent (educated, good speaker, knows what he's talking about).
Good with people (good personality, tactful, understanding, able to get along well with others, able to communicate).
Dedicated and interested.
Aggressive.
Respected, able to set a good example.
Broad-minded.

Poverty in the Community

Two thirds of members of the Niton district (65%) reported that they felt there were at least some 'really poor' people in the district. Of these, 4% said they themselves were 'really poor'. Of those respondents who reported the existence of poverty in the Niton district, one fifth (21%) said that 1 or 2 families could be classified as 'really poor', and another fifth (21%) said they could think of 3 or 4 families. About 16% could think of from 5 to 8 and 5% could think of more than 8 in this category.

Respondents who perceived poverty were asked how the poorness showed. The indices named, in order of frequency of mention, were as follows:

- Children not properly taken care of.
- Low standard of living.
- Living on welfare.
- Poor, overcrowded housing conditions.
- Always struggling without making any progress.
- In debt.

For those respondents who suggested reasons why members of the community were poor, the most common reasons given, in order of frequency of mention, were as follows:

- Lack of ambition, just lazy, lack of initiative.
- Generally poor management.
- Alcohol.
- Did not have any kind of a start, financial incapacibilities.
- Circumstances of weather.
- Health reasons.

Most respondents (57%) said they felt that the poor were reasonably satisfied with their way of life. About 18% said they were dissatisfied and resentful and about 14% said some were satisfied and dissatisfied. Three percent thought they were simply resigned to their lot and about 8% thought they were trying to get ahead and doing their best.

When respondents were asked if there was anything the government should do to help really poor families, nearly one quarter (23%) of families did not think anything should be done. Those respondents who did make recommendations suggested the following measures (in order of frequency of mention):

- Financial assistance (feed them, loans, lower taxes)
- Rehabilitation (education, re-training)
- Changes in welfare administration
- Get more jobs (bring in industry, guarantee minimum wage)
- Make them work (put in jail, punish them)
- Help for the children.

In summary: most respondents in the Niton sample perceive poverty stricken conditions in their community and most feel that the government should do something. A detailed consideration of poverty indicators and the extent of poverty will be given in the summary.

CHAPTER XIV

GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE COMMUNITY SITUATION

Satisfactions: Reasons People Want to Stay

As has been pointed out earlier, most people in the Niton district appear to be reasonably satisfied with their way of life and have generally little desire to move away from the community or to change their life style in a radical way. Respondents were given several opportunities to state why they wanted to stay in the area. The dominant positive reasons, in rank order by frequency of mention, are as follows:

Contentment and involvement (it's home, I'm established here, too involved to move, only place I ever knew)
Like farming
No place else to go (set in ways, don't like to move)
Like the geography (*i.e.* climate, soil)
Like the people.

In terms of *why people moved to the district*, the main reason (40%) was to get a farm. Fifteen percent came because they married a farmer and 14% came to find a 'better life' out of the city. Some 17% moved for financial reasons. Eight percent came because of previous family ties in the district. In all cases, the man of a husband-wife team had been in favor of the move and in 92% of the cases the wife had been also in favor. Almost all children who were old enough to have an opinion regarding a move to the Niton district were either in favor of the move or noncommittal and indifferent. Whatever the reasons bringing people to the Niton district, they were satisfied, for most people (74%) were definitely sure they would make the move again, and another 4% thought they probably would, under given conditions. About 6% said they didn't know if they would come again, and 16% were definitely sure they would not. Compared with the respondents in the Innisfail sample, residents moving into the Niton district have had much more reason to be disappointed and dissatisfied.

Dissatisfactions: Reasons People Want to Move

Only 28 respondents said they wanted to move away from the Niton district (and not all of these were actually planning a move). Of these, 7 said they wanted a milder climate, 4 said they were concerned about health problems, and 3 each were concerned with better facilities and with being

closer to family and friends. Three respondents said they generally hated it in the Niton district.

General Satisfaction Level

In response to the question: "How satisfied are you with life on this particular farm?" 43% of the Niton sample replied, without qualification, that they were very satisfied and another 44% replied that they were quite satisfied. About 2% did not know, 4% were dissatisfied with certain qualifications and 7% were dissatisfied, without qualification.

When respondents were asked what *satisfactions* they received from their *work*, 61% reported that they got satisfaction from the work *per se*. Fourteen percent liked the freedom and independence; 5% said it enabled them to help other people. No one in the Niton sample replied that he received no satisfaction from his work.

Perceived Problems

Respondents were asked what, in their opinion, constituted problems in their district about which the government should attempt to do something. Specifically, they were asked what further improvements and services they would like to see in the area. About 17% had no suggestions or opinions at all. The suggestions that were made are summarized in Table 1. The major areas of concern were transportation problems, education and major land improvements. It is interesting to note that, although the farmers of the Niton district could use a great deal of help, only 9% mentioned forms of help for the farmer. Perhaps this indicates a relatively low level of verbal facility, rather than a negative attitude towards help. If they had been asked if they approved of specific helpful measures, rather than presented with an open ended question, the results might have been quite different.

In terms of *government services*, two thirds (67%) did not think that any additional services were necessary. About 14% felt that additional utilities were needed and 11% felt that more agricultural services would be an improvement.

CHAPTER XIV, TABLE 1

Areas for Government Improvement
as Perceived by the Niton Sample*

General Area	Examples	% of sample interested
Help for the Farmer	--lower price of fertilizer, gas and machinery --higher prices for produce --cutdown on middlemen --more PFA --check badly made machinery --help to the little farmer	9%
Transportation Improvements	--more gravel or roads and improved bridges --better and more roads	32%
Major Land Improvements	--drain lakes, change course of rivers --land cleared for homesteaders, dams	20%
Education	--more convenient schools --Grade 12 at schools --teachers too tough (or too permissive)	19%
Economic Changes	--taxes reduced --farmers exempt from pension plan --more credit --control finance company interest --bring in industry	10%
Political Changes	--control labor unions --more socialist form of government	9%
Facilities	--more skating rinks, picnic grounds, post offices, community centers, etc.	1%

*Based on both first and second answers to the question:

"Are there any improvements you would like to see the government making in this area?"

CHAPTER XV

SUMMARY: THE NITON DISTRICT CONSIDERED IN TERMS OF POVERTY AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Indications of Poverty in the Community

The Niton district is characterized by enough poverty, as assessed by conventional indicators, that if it is not, strictly speaking, a poverty stricken district it is at least a district in which poverty is a major social problem. This statement is supported by descriptive statements throughout the report. Some of the more relevant points are listed in Table 1. In terms of all of the standard indicators, the Niton farmers are seen to fall considerably behind many other farmers in Alberta. It must be remembered that, although an income of less than \$2000 a year per family is definitely 'poor' in an urban setting, it goes somewhat farther in terms of standard of living on the farm, because of the absence of rent and the use of produce as food. However, the differences in the cost of living for Niton's respondents compared with other Alberta residents is not nearly enough to compensate for other factors contributing to poverty.

Recommendations

If one assumes that poverty and low standard of living are undesirable social problems, and further, that they are problems with which the government should attempt to cope, then the district surrounding Niton is certainly one area that should be included in any projects or schemes for rehabilitation, development or improvement.

CHAPTER XV , TABLE 1.

The Niton District Considered in
Terms of 'Poverty Indicators'

Indicator	The Niton Situation	Existence of Poverty
Size of Income	Modal category: \$1000 to \$2000 per family per annum. A fifth of respondents no income for past year	positive
Receipt of Welfare	2% of population supported mainly by cash contributions. No one (in sample) supported entirely by welfare	somewhat
Debt	Only 15% no debt at all. Most interest: less than 6%. All some difficulty making debt payments in last 3 years.	positive
Housing	10% of houses classified as 'high' on Edwards scale, 6% classified sub-standard. One third houses more than 1 person to a room.	somewhat
Health	1/2 in good or excellent health past year. 3/4 no health problems that interfere. 2/5 of families no health problems in past year. Medical bills generally less than \$100.	somewhat
Education	1/2 less than grade 9. 1/5 some high school. 1/4 no training other than school.	positive
Social Participation	2/5 belong to no organization. 3/8 go to church. Most vote. 1/3 could name neither political representative. 9/10 have never been an official in an organization.	positive
Identification of self as poor	4% of respondents identified themselves as 'really poor'.	somewhat
Poverty in Community	2/3 perceived some 'really poor' families.	positive
Comparative Advancement	1/2 less prosperous than siblings. 1/6 about equal.	positive
Value of Holdings	Modal category for cash value of farms in the Niton area: \$10,000 to \$25,000.	positive



HUMAN RESOURCES RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

